



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION III

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Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov>

No. III-02-047

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August 2, 2002

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NRC PROPOSES \$6,000 FINE AGAINST V.A. MEDICAL CENTER IN ST. LOUIS FOR FAILURE TO PROPERLY DISPOSE OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$6,000 fine against the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in St. Louis, Missouri, for improper disposal of low-level radioactive waste and for failing to promptly notify the NRC, when the inappropriate disposal was identified.

On two occasions in March, V.A. Medical Center staff placed radioactive waste in a normal trash receptacle rather than a specifically designated container, resulting in unauthorized disposal of radioactive material in non-radioactive trash.

On March 18 and 29, the Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety informed the NRC that radioactive material, originating at the V.A. Medical Center, was found at a trash landfill.

The V.A. Medical Center staff determined that one disposal contained approximately 2 millicuries of iodine-131, which is twice the quantity requiring immediate NRC notification, and the other disposal contained approximately 150 microcuries of technetium-99m, which did not require immediate notification.

On April 11, the V.A. Medical Center staff determined that the quantity of disposed iodine-131 exceeded the notification limit, but did not notify the NRC until April 30.

While the amount of radioactive material was small, and calculations indicate that significant exposure to the public from the improper disposal was unlikely, this violation represents a regulatory concern because it involved the improper disposal of radioactive material, which could have resulted in inadvertent exposure to employees and members of the public.

The NRC conducted an inspection into the circumstances of the incident and held a predecisional enforcement conference with representatives of the National Health Physics Program of the Veterans Health Administration and the V.A. Medical Center in St. Louis to discuss the violations and corrective actions.

The medical center has until August 30 to either pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the company may request a hearing.

The letter notifying the V. A. Medical Center of the proposed fine will be posted to the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/enforcement/actions/>.

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